

Storytelling Tips

(borrowed from themoth.org)

Story Slam is meant to build a community of storytellers and story lovers to help bring more stories into the world and onto the stage.

Be forewarned.

No notes, paper or cheat sheets allowed on stage. Story Slam stories are told, not read. Please know your story “by heart,” but not by rote memorization.

Have some stakes.

Stakes are essential in live storytelling. What do you stand to gain or lose? Why is what happens in the story important to you? If you can’t answer this, then think of a different story. A story without stakes is an essay and is best experienced on the page, not the stage.

Start in the action.

Have a great first line that sets up the stakes or grabs attention.

No: “So I was thinking about climbing this mountain. But then I watched a little TV and made a snack and took a nap and my mom called and vented about her psoriasis then I did a little laundry (a whites load) (I lost another sock, darn it!) and then I thought about it again and decided I’d climb the mountain the next morning.”

Yes: “The mountain loomed before me. I had my hunting knife, some trail mix and snow boots. I had to make it to the little cabin and start a fire before sundown or freeze to death for sure.”

Steer clear of meandering endings.

They kill a story! Your last line should be clear in your head before you start. Yes, bring the audience along with you as you contemplate what transpires in your story, but remember, you are driving the story, and must know the final destination. Keep your hands on the wheel!

Know your story well enough so you can have fun!

Make an outline, memorize your bullet points and play with the details. Enjoy yourself. Imagine you are at a dinner party, not a deposition.

No standup routines please.

Truth Be Told LOVES funny people but requires that all funny people tell funny STORIES.

No rants.

Take up this anger issue with your therapist, or skip therapy and shape your anger into a story with some sort of resolution. (Stories = therapy!)

No essays.

Your eloquent musings are beautiful and look pretty on the page but unless you can make them gripping and set up stakes, they won’t work on stage.